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**Report to the President of the United States  
U.S. Delegation to Rwanda, Burundi and Zaire  
August 26-31, 1994**

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September 9, 1994

The Honorable William J. Clinton  
The White House  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:


From August 26-31, 1994, we led a Presidential mission to Rwanda, Burundi and eastern Zaire. The accompanying report presents a summary of the delegation's findings and recommendations.

The members of this delegation came from a variety of institutions and brought a range of personal experience that, we believe, contributed to the success of the mission. Each of us has returned from the trip with a renewed commitment to the challenges facing this region.

Unfortunately, we found no hint of a simple, comprehensive solution to the tragic ethnic and political violence that has wracked Rwanda and Burundi. Indeed, any course of action will require difficult policy choices. Hopefully, our findings will help frame those decisions.

Your authorization of this mission communicates that America remains engaged in the region. That is an important message in itself. We are honored to have participated in this endeavor.

Sincerely,

  
C. Payne Lucas  
President, Africare

  
Donald M. Payne  
U.S. Congress

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## **Report to the President of the United States U.S. Delegation to Rwanda, Burundi and Zaire August 26-31, 1994**

### **Introduction**

The members of this diverse delegation brought a variety of personal and organizational experience to the mission. (Names, affiliations and biographic information attached, Appendix A). In visits to Goma, Zaire; Kigali, Rwanda; and Bujumbura, Burundi, we held extensive meetings with political and military leadership, with United Nations representatives, with U.S. Departments of State and Defense officials, and with private relief and development workers. The delegation also visited refugee camps, centers for unaccompanied children and staging areas for humanitarian assistance. (Complete schedule attached, Appendix B.)

Although this report is a somewhat compressed summary of a wide range of impressions and concerns, it reflects a high degree of consensus among the delegation. Some of our recommendations require U.S. government action; others can be undertaken through private initiatives. Each member of the delegation is now considering how his or her organization can contribute to the resolution of the challenges we encountered. We believe that the authorization of this mission sent a signal to the governments of Rwanda and Burundi that the United States remains concerned and engaged. We thank you for this opportunity and for the confidence you have placed in us. We remain at your service if further action is desired.

### **Interrelated Problems**

During the course of the trip, the members of the delegation had frequent opportunities to discuss among ourselves the circumstances in Rwanda, Burundi and eastern Zaire. Because we found those situations so inextricably intertwined, we have organized our impressions and recommendations under the following general categories:

- (1) Humanitarian Assistance;
- (2) Security Concerns;
- (3) Accountability;
- (4) Reconciliation; and
- (5) Resource Needs.

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## **Humanitarian Assistance**

The U.S. response to the massive flow of Rwandan refugees to Zaire in July was impressive and, in fulfilling its necessarily limited objectives, highly successful. In an informative briefing to the delegation in Kigali, General Daniel Schroeder described Phase One of Joint Task Force Support Hope as, simply, to "stop the dying." The conditions in the large camps near Goma, Zaire were vastly improved over the chaos of several weeks earlier when Representative Donald Payne, co-chair of this delegation, saw them for the first time.

By tackling the water problem with sustainable solutions, by establishing 24-hour air-heads at Kigali and Entebbe, and by closely coordinating with U.N. agencies and non-governmental organizations, the U.S. Armed Forces averted the certain deaths of tens of thousands of people. U.S. contributions to sanitation, health care and infrastructure improvements have also been significant. It should be noted with pride that private Americans from all walks of life greatly assisted the relief effort. They continue to contribute their time and energy to alleviate this crisis.

Despite these successes, the need for humanitarian assistance in Rwanda, Burundi and eastern Zaire is by no means satisfied. The Kibumbu refugee camp at Goma may have moved from the ninth circle of hell to the second or first, but it is still hell. The fate of children remains a matter of particular concern. Thousands of youngsters have lost their parents and wander the roads alone. The blank expressions on their faces testify to the severe trauma many of these children have endured. The lucky ones are brought to camps for unaccompanied children where they receive food, shelter, medical treatment, and a modicum of caring attention. According to workers at the camps, this latter, less tangible provision is as important to the health of these tormented children as food and water, but it is in short supply in the thinly staffed camps.

As the story of the unprecedented exodus of refugees from Rwanda and its accompanying crisis grows stale, the media have already turned their attention to other matters. The death of "only" 200 to 300 people per day is not enough to keep the media focused on this crisis. The delegation fears that international concern may fade as well. Crucial needs persist, and the situation in all three countries remains highly unstable.

Repatriation of refugees to Rwanda remains the goal of relief professionals and the international community. Hence, the camps provide only the most basic needs, and humanitarian assistance is offered across the border in Rwanda. Medical facilities, limited transportation and way stations offering basic necessities are being made available to returnees on the trek home. For Rwandan refugees in Zaire, however, other factors preventing repatriation exist. These are discussed below under Security Concerns.

### Recommendations for Humanitarian Assistance:

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(1) Continue to support and increase the provision of basic necessities and medical care to Rwandans returning from refugee camps. Ensure that the United States fulfills commitments it has made to the United Nations and relief organizations.

(2) Continue to improve U.S. Armed Forces capability to coordinate with non-governmental and U.N. organizations (e.g., the Civilian Military Operations Center and similar initiatives).

(3) Encourage American non-governmental organizations to remain involved in the Rwanda/Burundi area of operations even after media attention wanes.

### Security Concerns

A significant number of Rwandans of Hutu ethnicity who fled before the advancing Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) army probably participated in or had direct knowledge of the massacres that killed hundreds of thousands of Tutsis (as well as numerous targeted Hutus). These refugees feared that if they had stayed in Rwanda, they would have suffered violent retribution from RPF soldiers. That fear has been exacerbated by officials and soldiers of the previous government and leaders of the *interahamwe* militias who have also taken up residence in the refugee camps.

There is strong evidence that former government officials and militia leaders have threatened and even killed Hutus who advocated returning to Rwanda. One U.N. official described to the delegation a disturbing incident which occurred just a few days ago: after encouraging his people to return to Rwanda, a village elder was killed in front of them by militia members. In another incident of which he had personal knowledge, the U.N. official said that former Rwandan game wardens being transported by the U.N. back to Rwanda to reassume their duties were stopped, pulled from their vehicle, and badly beaten in front of U.N. personnel. Several of them later disappeared and are presumed dead.

The motivations of the former government leadership seem clear: as long as they can retain control of a sizeable portion of the Rwandan population outside the country, they will remain a viable political force. Should they lose the refugee population, they would be nothing but criminals in exile.

This situation places humanitarian organizations, and particularly the U.N. High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), in a delicate position: they cannot force the repatriation of people who do not wish to return, but they realize that the primary motivation for not returning may be intimidation in the camps -- camps which the UNHCR ostensibly runs. As a further complication, UNHCR and other assistance providers inadvertently may be helping the leadership consolidate its power over the refugees by acquiescing to the leadership's demands that it control the distribution of all donated assistance. When the UNHCR attempted to provide plastic sheeting directly to refugees

who needed it, for example, the leadership nearly caused a riot.

The role of the Zairois military in the region is not completely clear, but, to say the least, it does not appear to be universally helpful. Even if Zairois troops were convinced to patrol the camps and disarm the former Rwandan government soldiers, they do not have the capability to do so at current regional force levels. Moreover, the Zairois military is in such disarray, from payment of salaries to discipline within the ranks, that it is unclear what an effective enforcement presence would require. How far the United States is willing to go to support a positive Zairois role must be squarely faced and decided upon at the top levels of our government. Like many policy decisions, it may necessitate choosing the lesser of evils. A non-Zairois peacekeeping force, operating under U.N. authority, may be necessary and should be considered as well.

Although refugee camps in Zaire and, to a lesser extent in Tanzania, host former government officials, soldiers and militia leaders, camps in Burundi do not. Any of these individuals who find themselves in Burundi are subject to summary dispatch by the predominantly Tutsi Burundian military. Although Burundian political parties are holding meetings to resolve the question of presidential succession, the pressing issue of a 95-percent Tutsi army with a tradition of brass-knuckle tactics remains unaddressed. In a country where two presidents have been assassinated in the past eight months, where cabinet ministers leave the country each night to avoid being killed, and where 50,000 or more citizens were massacred less than a year ago, it is an understatement to say the situation is tense.

The delegation believes that, in both Rwanda and Burundi, radio broadcasts have played a diabolically important role. After the drumbeat of hatred transmitted during the massacres in Rwanda, radio broadcasts fomented the exodus to Zaire, and even now propaganda warning refugees not to return to Rwanda emanates from an elusive mobile transmitter. Radio played a similarly incendiary role in the massacres in Burundi in October 1993.

The Burundi massacres of 1993 provided Rwandan extremists with a lesson in the power of radio, but we believe it told them something even more disturbing: that massacres of genocidal proportions can be conducted without fear of punishment from the rest of the world. This issue is discussed below under Accountability.

#### Recommendations for Security Concerns:

(4) Continue to encourage the Government of Rwanda to provide assurances to returning refugees of fair treatment under rule of law. Ask the Government of Rwanda to consider publicizing an equitable land tenure policy for all returnees.

(5) Task a U.S. interdepartmental working group to consider realistic ways in which control over refugees in Zaire by former governmental officials and militia leaders can be broken.

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(6) Urge Government of Zaire to control activities in and around refugee camps by former Rwandan army personnel and by Zaire's own armed forces personnel. Seek assistance in the disposal of arms and disarmament of former Rwandan soldiers. Consider a resolution authorizing a U.N. peacekeeping force to perform these roles.

(7) Task USIA and other appropriate U.S. government agencies to examine the role of radio broadcasting in Rwanda and Burundi in recent years. Part of their mandate should be to develop effective and timely countermeasures to incendiary broadcasts.

(8) Consider the means by which the U.S. government could assist the ethnic integration and professionalization of the Rwandan and Burundian militaries under civilian governments. Consider U.S. military participation in advisory, educational and civic action programs.

## Accountability

The Hutu-Tutsi conflict in central Africa has existed for generations, but since independence it has taken a particularly nasty turn. At different times, each group has been the victim, and each has played the persecutor. This delegation has no desire to attempt to assign fundamental blame to either ethnic group. Rather, we wish to understand its dynamics well enough to recommend actions that might break the debilitating cycle of violence. A comparison of the recent massacres in Rwanda with those of Burundi one year ago is chillingly thought provoking.

After first-ever democratic elections in Burundi (ably assisted by the National Endowment for Democracy's National Democratic Institute), President Melchior Ndadaye, a Hutu, was assassinated by extremist elements of the military in October 1993. Hutu civilians reacted violently and killed thousands of Tutsis throughout the country; Tutsis responded and, with the army playing a central role, massacred thousands of Hutu civilians. International media coverage was sketchy. (At the time, the Africa-based international media's attention was diverted by the U.N.'s deadly game of hide-and-seek with General Aideed in Somalia.) Diplomatic sanctions were inadequate. The event, although not altogether unnoticed, passed without severe recrimination from any authoritative representative of the world community. ← not true

Six months later, Hutu extremists in Rwanda, fearful of a coalition government with Tutsis of the Rwandan Patriotic Front, carefully planned the elimination of the Tutsi population as well as Hutus who were known to be sympathetic to a coalition government. As in Burundi, the catalyst was the assassination of the president. Once again, radio was effectively used to mobilize the population. And, once again, media attention was scarce. (Nearly every international journalist in Africa -- and most members of this delegation -- were focused on the historic elections taking place in South Africa.) Sustained accounting of the massacres began to emerge only after the RPF invaded and gained a foothold. As ← not true



the RPF army advanced, a few journalists and human rights monitors followed in its path to report on the carnage.

Although it cannot be known for sure, there is a haunting possibility that the genocide in Rwanda might have been averted by a stronger demand for accountability in the wake of the Burundi massacres. This delegation believes that bringing to justice the perpetrators of the Rwandan genocide would send an important signal to extremists in Burundi, as well as in Rwanda and elsewhere, that such crimes cannot be committed with impunity.

The engine of that justice has not yet been built. Although the United Nations has established a Commission of Experts, it is unclear how thorough their investigation will be. It is also unclear whether the U.N. Security Council will successfully pass a resolution establishing an effective tribunal. What is clear, however, is the strong and understandable desire for retribution among the survivors of this slaughter. Whether the perpetrators are tried under the rule of law with protections usually accorded criminal defendants or given "rough justice" in kangaroo courts may depend upon the adequacy and timeliness of these efforts. The sooner an effective tribunal is put in place, the sooner it may affect the behavior of the various parties. The delegation believes that reconciliation, discussed below, is essential for the stability of the region. Without some degree of accountability, however, reconciliation is unlikely.

#### Recommendations for Accountability:

(9) Provide diplomatic leadership in the United Nations for the establishment of an effective international entity for the investigation and prosecution of war crimes and crimes against humanity in Rwanda. Raise the profile of the Commission of Experts by recommending the addition of internationally renowned jurists to its roster.

(10) Establish a reliable and easily accessible U.S. conduit to the international entity referred to in (9) above for providing information regarding massacres in Rwanda. Notify human rights organizations, relief groups, etc. that may be able to provide such information.

(11) Join this delegation in calling upon U.S. private organizations to lend their support to the investigation and monitoring of crimes against humanity in Rwanda. Support the deployment of international human rights monitors. Consider the deployment of human rights monitors to Burundi as well.

(12) Consider supporting an international conference to examine the strength of the world community's commitment to punish and prevent the crime of genocide.

(13) Encourage the Government of Rwanda to enforce strictly the rule of law among its soldiers who may be tempted to make reprisals against returning refugees.

(14) Urge the Burundian judiciary and military to institute reforms that would allow

the prosecution of soldiers involved in extrajudicial killings and intimidation.

### **Reconciliation**

The notion of communal rather than individual responsibility is more pronounced in many African societies than in our own. "Sins of the fathers" are visited not only upon their sons, but upon their brothers, sisters, cousins, and so on. Some Hutus who had nothing to do with the massacres in Rwanda (and some who had, in fact, sheltered and rescued Tutsi neighbors) nonetheless fled before the advancing RPF army. Extremist leaders in the camps recognize and play upon that vein of communal responsibility in sowing fear of return among the refugees.

The delegation believes stability requires reconciliation and that true reconciliation in Rwanda depends upon separating from the general population those individuals responsible for the planning and execution of the genocide.

In Burundi, the army poses a considerable source of tension. Almost entirely composed of Tutsi soldiers, the Burundian military should be ethnically integrated with diligence and speed. It should also be reformed and reeducated to reflect the appropriate role for the armed forces in a civilian-led constitutional democracy. The Rwandan government should also consider the integration of its armed forces a priority of its young administration.

Concentrated efforts in both Burundi and Rwanda should be made by governments and non-governmental entities to shed light and air on these societies' festering ethnic wounds. Our recommendations suggest several avenues for action.

#### **Recommendations for Reconciliation:**

(15) Encourage appropriate private groups within the international community to offer programs to reconcile Hutu and Tutsi communities in Rwanda and Burundi. These groups might include but are not limited to:

- religious organizations;
- universities;
- development agencies;
- political advisory groups (such as NDI and IRI); and
- U.N. agencies.

(16) Encourage the Governments of Rwanda and Burundi to structure land policies to reduce as much as possible conflicts which arise over scarce resources or competing claims of ownership.

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(17) Support the Governments of Rwanda and Burundi in their capacity to administer justice equitably and under the rule of law.

(18) Encourage discussion among Rwandan and Burundian opinion leaders as to how they can reduce tension among ethnic groups. Consider support for the Burundian proposal of a conference of "lake countries" (Burundi, Rwanda, Zaire, Uganda and Tanzania).

(19) Provide support for the education and sensitizing of children to ethnic tolerance.

(20) Support the demobilization of troops in Rwanda and Burundi with the goal of ethnic diversity within the remaining armed forces.

(21) Consider how best to take advantage of the Burundian defense minister's offer to receive human rights monitors into the Burundian armed forces. Consider a similar program for Rwandan armed forces.

### Resource Needs

Although most members of this delegation are accustomed to urging reductions in African civil sectors, Rwanda is the exception. No longer a rebel movement, the new government of Rwanda must assume the extensive -- and expensive -- responsibilities of administering a country recovering from war and trauma. The issue of how it governs, though critical, may be moot if it has no capacity to govern. At this time, that capacity is minuscule. Its needs range from the human (professional staff in a variety of roles) to the infrastructural (communications, electricity, water, financial) to the mundane (typewriters, computers, chairs and copy machines).

In an appeal to this delegation, the Special Representative of the U.N. Secretary General stated that the hundreds of millions of dollars pledged to the U.N. operation in Rwanda and scheduled to arrive in six months may be less important than a small fraction of those funds which is made available now. The same argument is true for the fledgling Government of Rwanda.

Although Rwanda faces particularly daunting governance challenges, Burundi could also benefit from improved and more capable governmental institutions. Both countries also have the need for food security monitoring. Harvests have been missed in Burundi as well as Rwanda, and the impact is still being felt.

Emergency assistance in response to disasters and massive refugee flows is important and necessary, but this delegation believes that development assistance remains crucial. Those projects which contribute to the avoidance of conflict represent money well spent.

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In both Rwanda and Burundi, medium and long term development projects aimed at rural producers should continue to be pursued. Idle youth in both countries should also be a focus for targeted projects. These efforts should not fall to the United States alone. Rather, a global response is necessary and should be encouraged.

### Recommendations for Resource Needs:

(22) Support the Government of Rwanda's desperate need for basic administrative and infrastructural assistance: electricity, communications, office equipment, banking and currency institutions, professional abilities, water supply, and so on. Because stability requires a functioning government, some resources should be made available quickly.

(23) Consider as well the infrastructural needs of Burundi and how support may encourage stabilization of the political situation there.

(24) Closely monitor food security of both Rwanda and Burundi; be prepared to lend support if a food shortage appears imminent.

(25) Medium and long term development assistance, while not as crucial as emergency humanitarian assistance, may be essential to stabilizing this volatile region; consider programs that directly assist large rural, agricultural populations.

### **Conclusion**

The delegation would like to make special mention of the excellent efforts of the sparsely staffed U.S. Missions in Rwanda and Burundi. Ambassadors Robert Krueger in Burundi and David Rawson in Rwanda -- and their staff people -- serve at the front lines in a sensitive and potentially dangerous environment. They are to be commended. The Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance is also playing an important role, both in its traditional activities and as interlocutor between non-governmental organizations and the U.S. Armed Forces.

If there are simple solutions to the crises in Rwanda, Burundi and eastern Zaire, they have eluded this delegation. Tough decisions -- often choices between greater and lesser evils -- will confront policy makers at every step. We hope that our observations and recommendations serve at least to frame some of these choices. For our part, the mission has clarified the important contribution private individuals and organizations can make to the alleviation of a crisis, especially when it is coordinated with governmental efforts. We accept the implicit challenge to work within our own spheres of influence to promote creative and effective solutions to the concerns we have raised in this report.